Aristasia Treasure Trove

The Hestia Friday, May 11 2007

Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia3:41 pm

"Hestia" means the home or household, properly "the place centred on the hearth-fire", which is the embodiment of the sun in the microcosm of the house (as is the heart in the microcosm of the body).

The term "hestia" is often used in contradistinction to "agora", which means the public world. Patriarchal societies tend to be agoracentric, believing that the public world is the focus of all importance, while feminine societies are more hestiacentric, seeing the household as the centre of life (we still refer in English to our homes as "where we live" – a very significant expression when one thinks about it).

The movement from hestia to agora has been an important part of late-patriarchy. Most early education, for example, once took place in the home, as did much work. People who owned shops often lived above or behind them and the shop was a "public" extension of the home. Many craftspeople worked from their homes, as did farmers.

Today most of these functions are transferred to "public" institutions like schools, factories, and supermarkets, while television brings the agora right into the centre of the home, forming a new "focus" (the word "focus" originally means "hearth-fire").

Aristasians stress the importance of the hestia as the centre of life. For example, when modern people perceive something amiss with the world, their first thought tends to be to change the agora (this is termed "politics"). Aristasians point out that such efforts are largely futile, as one has no control over the agora, whereas one can have full control over one's hestia, and this is where efforts should be directed. The idea of Aristasia-in-Telluria as a union of linked households (or hestias) is thus based in Aristasian philosophy.

Leave a Response »

Education in Aristasia Saturday, May 5 2007

Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia2:26 pm

At one time in the West of Aristasia Pura the system of the Estates was more predominant and each Estate had its own kind of education. The Magdala, or "makers", went to something like grammar schools where they received a sound basic education. This was particularly the case when they were actually "sellers" – merchants and entrepreneurs rather than craftmaids. For the craftmaids, the Guilds undertook much of their education, which took many forms but centred on the "mysteries" of the craft which were something much more than mere "trade secrets" and had both an effective magical application (with relation to craft practices – for the making of things was and is less a purely physical matter than it is in Telluria) and also constituted a Spiritual Path.

The Raihira, or Noble Estate, received a raihiralan education, which, in early times consisted of learning many "accomplishments", such as languages, singing, mathematics, drawing, poetry (every accomplished Raihira should be able to produce well-constructed verse) and so forth. In some cases there was a primary stress on the Vikhelic (martial) arts. While blondes and brunettes learned many of the same things, there were often certain subjects specific to blondes and others specific to brunettes.

Later, as the Estate system weakened and moved closer to the modern Western form (which is more akin to the vaguer system known in Telluria as "class") the great Royal Schools were founded – akin to the Tellurian British Public School (not to be confused with the American public school, which is a very different thing). These were very traditional, concentrated much on Estrenne languages and ancient Raihira tradition. They were the ultimate foundation of the modern rayalin education, but they were still something quite different.

The Haiela, or Priestly and Intellectual Estate, was educated mainly in the Temples. The more secular Haiela went to Temple Schools. They learned most of what the Raihira learnt, and also many higher things. Some were highly skilled at philosophical enquiry. The highest, of course, pursued Realisation through the path of Pure Intellect, transcending earthly reason, yet even these received a thorough grounding in "speakable philosophy" – that wisdom which can be spoken and is therefore not the highest. Philosophy in the end is a preparatory stage. Etymologically it means love of Wisdom, for it is that which prepares us for Wisdom. It is not Wisdom Herself.

The training of the Haiela, at all levels, was extremely rigorous.

This, then is the Old System, described rather briefly. Of course it took different forms in different times and places, but this, essentially was its structure. In the West in more recent times, the system of the Estates became weakened, and the raihiralan education of the Royal Schools became a more general rayalin education (which properly means "education for a titled lady" but nowadays means just "education for the higher sort of person"). The Royal schools are now attended by the Raihira, much of the Haiela and the upper Magdala, while the lower Magdala (and some less accomplished Raihira) use the grammar schools.

The system of Estates is much less marked in the modern West, and many people only vaguely associate themselves with their Estate, having a much less specific "class"-based view of life.

In parts of the East, however, the Old System prevails, and even older systems are found in many places.

Leave a Response »

Their Serene Highnesses Sunday, Apr 29 2007

Aristasian Society and Culture and Aristasiansaristasia4:16 pm

The Empress is Her Imperial Majesty Celestia III. She is the direct descendant of Sai Rayanna, the Sun-Daughter and first Cairen Empress. She is regarded, in her function if not in her person, as the incarnation of the sun herself. This is the meaning of the great salutation: *Rayati Raihiranya* – Hail to the Empress (as an incarnation of the Sun).

The position of Empress is therefore a hereditary one although it does not necessarily follow the Tellurian law of primogeniture. All daughters of the Imperial Family are Imperial Princesses and all are brought up in seclusion and with considerable rigour in the great temple-palace at the heart of the Imperial City. The slightly modern way of life adopted by some Westrenne Royal Families is out of the question for the Imperial Family. An Imperial Princess is one of the most highly-trained, profoundly cultured and rigorously disciplined maidens in the Empire. The selection of the Imperial Princess who is to become Empress takes place according to tests and rituals that are unknown to any outside the highest Haiela and Raihira who make up the Traditional hierarchy of the Imperial Court and Sun-Temple.

Those who are unsuited to this demanding life are usually allowed to withdraw. They then become Serene Highnesses whose functions are purely ceremonial. It should perhaps be mentioned here that the use of the term "Serene Highness" to mean non-authoritative royalty is something of a Westrenne joke. The honorific "serene" is in fact used, upon the proper occasions, for *all* royalty, up to – and *a fortiori* including – the Empress herself. It denotes the "unacting action" of the Spiritual Principle, and is expressed in the scriptural passage:

Earth moves but Heaven is still. The rim revolves, but the Centre remains without motion

The still point from which all movement arises, like the point without extension from which all space proceeds, is represented on earth by Her Serene Majesty; and her governance of the Empire is likened to the actionless action of the Spirit. It is from this central idea that the term "Serene Highness" is accorded secondarily to the whole Imperial Family.

However, in the Westrenne lands there is a certain spirit of "activism", "individualism" and "exteriorism" akin to, but by no means as extreme as, that in modern Western Telluria, and this spirit, at its most gross, can see serenity as simple inactivity. The pretence that the "Serene" in "Serene Highness" denotes lack of authority or active participation in Government is thus a humorously deliberate "misunderstanding". Actually the reason they are often known by this title is that it is one of the fundamental titles belonging to the Imperial Family and held by all its members, as opposed to some other titles which derive from particular functions.

Incidentally, the term "All serene", used in Aristasian military and other circles, means "all in order": and while its superficial meaning is "all quiet, nothing wrong", at a profounder level it implies "all is right" – i.e. all is in harmony with the serenely unchanging Principle, and thus with the Will of Heaven – and by extension of Heaven's daughter, the Empress.

Leave a Response »

Re-education and Racination Saturday, Apr 28 2007

Aristasian Fashion and Style and Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia8:05 am

Signorina Clarissa asked:

I am relatively new to Aristasia (and I am not so good at English, but I hope you will be patient with me!!!).

I have a question about how a maid can re-racinate and re-educate herself ; especially while being, like I am, 'on her own' and not having the possibility to attend Aristasia-in-Telluria events, nor events in Virtualia (due to the capacity limits of my ordinator), apart from The White Rose Room.

Which books, or films, would you suggest to read or watch, that are particularly charming and where one can be inspired by how maids are clothed, how they behave, talk, or which are the books where one can feel this lost atmosphere of innocence, grace and charm, or even learn about etiquette and proper behaviour? Which up-to-date magazines would you recommend? I am also interested in books that analyze deeper and more subtle subjects, such as Archetypes and their importance. Would that be useful also to read old books in my own language, that are written in a proper language?

On the subject of clothes, I have tried to find nice and feminine up-to-date clothes or accessories on this Elektraspace market, but it's not so evident for me to know how to wear them without a reference or a guide.

Miss Sushuri Madonna answered:

I am sure books and films from your own country will be helpful to you.

It is often said that it is not necessarily the most "artistic" books and films that are the most racinating, but those that give a straightforward picture of the Real World. The books of Agatha Christie are often recommended, as are schoolgirl books from the '20s to the '50s. Schoolgirl books are something of a British institution. Stories of life in girls' schools – usually boarding schools – flourished from the 1920s to the 1950s. They depict an all-female world, usually with values of honour, loyalty, and nobility; thus they make rather excellent Aristasian reading. Many authoresses specialise in them. Angela Brazil, Ethel Talbot, and Elinor Brent-Dyer are important names. The hugely prolific Enid Blyton also wrote numerous books in this genre. There are lots of others and I am sure I have missed out many people's favourites.

In Britain, among films, run-of-the-mill comedies and thrillers are often excellent racinating fare, with lovely street-scenes, sophisticated night-club scenes and in general a charming view of real British life. The ladies tend to dress and speak in ways that we can all profitably emulate. Run-of-the-mill comedies just means ordinary, everyday ones "B features", I think our American friends call them.

Nothing spectacular; just straightforward depictions of Quirinelle or Kadoria. Their very "ordinariness" can actually be an advantage in that one is not seeing a "clever slant" on the real world, but just seeing it as it is, through its own eyes, as it were.

Miss Anne Meade had some suggestions:

Now, how about your wardrobe? Well, probably the best thing to do is to start with black and start to build colours around it. First, choose a particular style – perhaps Trentish Chic or Quirrie Crispness or the more stark Kadorian lines. Once the choice has been made, find a black skirt that fits in with it. Quirrie girls usually go for a full circle skirt that comes to somewhere just below the knee. A Trentish lady will want something quite fitted around the hips but perhaps with inverted pleats or a wider bias -cut hemline.

Next, find something for the top half. There is nothing quite as versatile or safe as a basic twin set – and it fits in with any period. For Trent, choose Pastel shades, for Kadoria something like dusty pink or baby blue. For Quirinelle you ought probably to choose bright red or electric blue. The important thing about wearing a twinset is the (hm-hm!) brassiere! Trentish and Kadorian styles ought to have something of the order of a basic "cross your heart", Playtex type of bra. For authentic Quirrie lines, think about a push-up, wonderbra or (best of all) a Marilynesque conical bra.

Trim your new outfits with belts, brooches, pearls and anything else you can find. However, two absolute essentials must be considered besides. First, no Quirrie, Trentish or Kadorian lady will ever leave the house without gloves and only very rarely without a hat. Gloves are not worn in the Pit because one's hands are cold, but because Bongos don't wear them. They are the absolute last word in class and style and you ought to have lots of them.

Secondly, tights are hideous! Get yourself a good suspender belt immediately and start wearing stockings. If you want advice about stockings, do ask; I shall be delighted to discuss them on a different occasion.

You may be able to obtain properly-styled clothing second-hand. However, if you can use a sewing machine, why not make your own? Quirrie skirts are one of the easiest things in the world to make!

Good luck! Do send photographs when you have affected your transformation – brunettes always like to see pictures of well-dressed blondes!

And *vice versa* indeed!

Leave a Response »

The Silver Screen Tuesday, Apr 24 2007

Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia8:33 am

Miss Victoria Mayhew admitted:

I tend to melt when I attend the cinema. And no, not just because of the swooningly dashing brunette actresses. Some films are just so wholesome and innocent and a relief to my soul that I can't help but get a little teary-eyed. I recently saw *Cheaper By The Dozen* and burst into tears. *National Velvet, Gone With The Wind, Little Women*…I love the silver screen! There's a certain enchantment about it, isn't there? Almost as though we are closer to the Idea as opposed to the mere Form.

Miss Caroline agreed:

Oh yes, Miss Mayhew is so right! Real films can be *such* a relief to the soul – I do think that is one of the reasons we blondes – or some of us – seem to get so almost-unaccountably emotional. It is the sense of goodness and rightness and real femininity that one gets from real films. Once – this will sound so silly – I cried because an actress in a Trentish film was wearing such a beautiful art-neo jacket. But it is more than that, isn't it – it is all the style and purity and glamour that such a jacket represents.

Perhaps that is why some of us cry – especially if we live in Telluria – because we see the ideal that we so much long for and so seldom see in our everyday life. Yet I am sure that is not the only reason.

Oh – one more thought – I was going back into the Archive and looking at the blonde from *Sakura*. I was rather impressed with the way her very-blonde hair fell over one eye. Only I hoped it was entirely sound and not a bit well, silly in the wrong way, if you know what I mean. I do hope not as I did rather adore it.

Miss Lindie said:

You know I am sure I have seen the most adorable bob in a Vintesse film, cut in a positively geometric art -neo swathe over one eye – though I can't remember whom it belonged to or which film it was in. Certainly my friend Miss Falconer at some time cultivated a wonderful jet-black bob covering her left eye most of the time.

Of course one can always capture charming things, but one feels much safer with a precedent, does one not? And if any one should worry about over-the-eye styles, as fate would have it, our delightful Miss Mayhew has recently supplied us with a *locus classicus* with which nomaid could argue – assuming she had any breath to argue with! – Miss Veronica Lake.

Leave a Response »

Ancient Matriarchy Saturday, Apr 21 2007

Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia9:34 am

From The Seven Great Janyati:

One frequently hears comments to the effect that "the once-popular theory of ancient matriarchy has now been discredited by scholars". The truth behind this statement is simply this. Scholars have declared, rightly, that there is no evidence that earlier civilisations were actually ruled by women. This is perfectly true, for there are no written records extant for these periods (which constitute a length of history many times greater than the whole era of patriarchy) and it is impossible to be certain what their social institutions were. What is quite clear is that in their iconography they were almost exclusively feminine-oriented.

The modern scholar takes it as axiomatic that female rule is inherently unlikely (this from people who otherwise argue that the differences between men and women are purely "socially conditioned", and therefore ought logically to believe that a different set of "conditioning" would produce a different social order) and that the burden of proof rests with those who claim that female rule ever existed. "If it cannot be proved, we may assume it did not exist as it is, after all, most improbable" is the unspoken "scholarly" assumption behind this, which is quickly expanded to "the theory of matriarchy has been discredited by scholars" in less rigorous contexts.

Knowing what we do of the way traditional peoples always organise their social activities and institutions in imitation of (in the words of the great anthropologist Mircea Eliade) "Those things first done by the gods", we should say that the very distinction between iconography, religion and social organisation is a purely modern one that only a rajasic-era mind could conceive of. Feminine-dominated iconography, for any traditional people, must imply a feminine-dominated society. In our view the burden of proof rests heavily upon the anti-matriarchy school. The existence of matriarchy is by far the most probable and reasonable hypothesis until and unless someone comes up with a shred of evidence against it.

Be that as it may, the existence of female-ruled civilisations is in no way necessary to the arguments of Deanic or Aristasian philosophy (Aristasians, in fact, have little real interest in Tellurian social order and certainly do not advocate matriarchy for Iron-Age Telluria). That society before "patriarchy" was feminine-oriented culturally and spiritually is beyond question. In the first part of the 20th Century, Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote:

[Our present civilisation stems from] a common cultural inheritance throughout an area extending from Mesopotamia to Egypt and the Ganges to the Mediterranean, [founded upon] the worship of the Great Mother.

Many thousands of discoveries made since that time have all served to confirm and amplify Dr. Coomaraswamy's statement.

Miss Tricia asked:

But Aristasians say femininity is not socially conditioned so what is your view on ancient matriarchy? If femininity isn't socially conditioned isn't subordination part of women's nature?

Miss Sushuri Novaryana replied:

Aristasians believe that femininity is a natural quality inherent in women which entails a quite different psychology and way of thought. This, although it is "controversial" in the Pit, is quite unquestionably proven by modern science.

We go further, however, and believe that femininity is a universal quality more fundamental than masculinity and that it was naturally the dominant principle in earlier ages. Only with the Kali Yuga and the dominance of the masculine principle does patriarchy come about.

In essence, femininity is natural, not conditioned. A feminine-centred society is equally natural. Just as the human brain is naturally feminine until it is (in the case of men) masculinised by male hormones, so human society is naturally feminine-centred until it is masculinised by the influence of the last and lowest of the world-ages – Kali Yuga or the Age of Iron.

Leave a Response »

Affection and competition Friday, Apr 6 2007

Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia4:58 pm

From *Aristasian Customs and Manners*

Affection is very abundant in Aristasia. If the higher degree of formality suggests coldness or distance to you, you must put that idea aside entirely. In Iron-Age Telluria, with its unbalanced-Vikhelic nature, rivalry and competition are common bases for relations with others. In Aristasia, love and appreciation of other girls is very deep. Seeing someone dressed beautifully pleases us. It may also inspire us to do better ourselves, but our first thought is: "How lovely; and how nice of her to make our world prettier". Affection is really quite overflowing in Aristasia, and there are many kinds of friendships and relationships. The idea of one jealously-guarded relationship, surrounded by (and sometimes causing) rivalry and wariness everywhere else, is very alien to Aristasia. Aristasia is regarded as a family with the Empress as the mother of all (sometimes termed the Little Mother of the World — because God is the Great Mother).

Love between Aristasians at all levels is one of the fundamentals, and showing respect is, in Aristasia, a way of showing affection. Of course one shows respect even to those for whom one may not feel affection, but for a good Aristasian, affection is almost universal. A thing the newcomer needs to understand, though, is that an Aristasian may often show someone *more* formal respect because she loves her, rather than less.

Lady Aquila comments:

While this is certainly true, it could give the impression that Aristasian society is non-competitive in nature. This is not the case. In academic work, for example, or in the Vikhelic (martial) Arts, there is vigorous competition. Competition for badges, medals, ribbons, sashes and such things, awarded by schools and other institutions is probably stronger than in most Tellurian establishments, and such little honours, which might be considered "childlike" in Telluria, are given in many contexts to grown Aristasians (for the idea of "adulthood", especially for blondes, is not nearly so strong. We are all children of the Empress and of Dea). Competition for the favour of elders and even prefects is also often intense.

So in some ways competition is a big part of at least some aspects of Aristasian life. What is harder to convey is the much friendlier spirit of this competition. In the more traditional contexts, as soon as a contest of any kind is over, the loser(s) reverence the winners and the winner(s), as the current holders of a certain aspect of Divine favour, bless the loser(s). In Telluria this might be seen as insufferable arrogance, but in Aristasia it is actually pleasurable for both parties. The easy transition between dominant (or giving) roles and subordinate (or receiving) ones should be light and beautiful, like a dance, and each should be full of grace and pleasure.

Where bitterness enters into competition, this is seen as an aberration; a lapse of *thamë*. It is not, in either the superficial social sense or the deeper metaphysical sense *good form*. Good form consists of an elegant dance in which all roles are graceful and pleasurable; and in which there is always a childlike pleasure in victory, whether the victory be one's own or another's.

For the full article see: Aristasian Customs and Manners

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